

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000003

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/6/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NAJAF SADRISTS SUGGEST RESPONSIBILITY FOR KILLING CLERIC;  
MORTARS HIT NEAR AL-HAKIM COMPOUN, 2005D

REF: HILLAH 05-0384

CLASSIFIED BY: ALFRED FONTENEAU, REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO,  
AL-HILLAH, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary: Flyers distributed from the offices of Moqtada Al-Sadr in Najaf and Kufa and from his compound in Najaf beginning on January 4 boast that a group called the "Battalions of Imam Mousa Al-Sadr" carried out the December 26 assassination of Shaykh Fattah Al-Thabhwawi, a mid-level cleric associated with both Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI.) In a separate incident on January 5, mortars landing near the Najaf compound of Ayatollah Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim injured three bystanders. End summary.

2. (C) Flyers available in the Najaf and Kufa offices of Moqtada Al-Sadr and at his Najaf compound beginning on January 4 appear to offer a claim of responsibility for the December 26 assassination of Shaykh Fattah Al-Thabhwawi, a mid-level cleric affiliated with both Sistani and SCIRI (reftel.) The flyers, headlined "The Islamic Iraqi Resistance," announce that they were published by "The Battalions of Imam Mousa Al-Sadr for the Vengeance of the Religious Mujahid Hawza." (Note: Mousa Al-Sadr was a Lebanese Shi'a leader who formed the Amal Movement in Lebanon but disappeared in Tripoli, Libya in 1978. End note.)

3. (C) The flyers appear to read as both an announcement of the previously unheard-of group's existence and as a claim of responsibility for the killing of Al-Thabhwawi. The flyers read, "We executed a spy who was working for one of the traitor militias in Najaf since he confessed that he was working with the invaders (a reference to Coalition Forces) to disgrace the reputation of the Mujahid Hawza in Najaf." While Al-Thabhwawi is not named in the flyer, his recent, high-profile murder was accompanied by rumors, according to SET Najaf local staff, that he had been responsible for providing information about wanted terrorists to the Iraqi Police (IP) and Coalition Forces. The flyers also reference IP raids on the home and office of Ayatollah Ahmed Al-Hassani Al-Baghdadi, a Sadrist cleric, which took place in the wake of Al-Thabhwawi's killing. The flyers threaten further killings against "invaders and spies" who threaten Iraq.

4. (C) On January 5, IP contacts reported that two mortar shells landed just outside the Najaf compound of Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim, a cousin of the father of SCIRI Leader Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim. The shells struck a car and a residence, badly wounding two adults and a child. The wounded were taken to Al-Hakim Hospital and the IP sealed the area and began searching for the attackers.

5. (C) Comment: While SET Najaf local staff and other Najaf contacts report no previous knowledge of the group mentioned on the flyers, the fact that the flyers were distributed from offices and the compound of Moqtada Al-Sadr would seem to suggest that there is at least tacit Sadrist support for Al-Thabhwawi's killing. That the group apparently responsible for the flyer also mentioned the raids against Al-Baghdadi, which Sadr himself condemned and which sparked a Sadrist demonstration in downtown Najaf, might also suggest at least a tenuous connection between Sadr and the "Mousa Al-Sadr Battalion." Further, the name of the group, which includes the label "Mujahid Hawza," is reminiscent of the term "Speaking Hawza," a name which Sadr frequently uses in reference to his following. End comment.

FONTENEAU